

Food and Water Types Selection and Combinations - Impacts on Our Health

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Life expectancy in Ghana and Africa as a whole is generally very low compared to that of the developed countries. This raises the question of why the difference. My thoughts to explain some of the contributions to the difference exposed me to the following questions;

- Did Africans actually live longer in the past?
- Have our life styles changed? – With the influx of the different imported foods which some we have not much knowledge of what they actually contain?
- Is Africa a dumping ground for unwanted goods which some are disease borne?
- Do we really know what we are eating and drinking, and do we really care or aware of any danger?
- Are any food and/or drink and its combinations good for our survival or longevity?
- Do we really select our food and drinking habits to support our body's immunity?
- Do most of our diseases have a common cause?
- Do we wait until we are about to die before we visit medical facilities?
- Do Africans like to go for regular checkup?
- Is poverty the key to the low life expectancies? Some relation has been found to exists between wealth and longevity known as the “wealth gradient of mortality”.
- Is the generally low level of education in Ghana and Africa the cause? Also, some relation has been found to exist between the level of education and longevity.
- Does the African governments really care or are not knowledgeable enough to deal with the situation?
- Are African ready to change if the governments are ready to assist?
- What systems are in place to safeguard the lives of people of Ghana as well as Africa?
- Are there things to do in our small ways to improve on our life expectancies?

Some of the reasons may be due to late diagnosis of health problems for appropriate treatment or measures, patients waiting too long to visit medical facilities, affordability of medical treatment even if diagnosed very early, lack of medical infrastructure and proper health education, poor interactions between some medical professionals and patients, lack of knowledge of what we are eating/drinking, etc. Note that you are what you eat and the environment in which you live. Poor growth may indicate poor nutrition and environment and vice versa. To live healthier and longer, we need to take control of our lives.

This piece is for awareness and provision of momentum for us to read and know more on what could be done in our small ways to stop this short life cankerworm. More goes into protecting our bodies as well as to maintain proper health; however a basic parameter “pH” which is related to balance/imbalance in the body could be used to explain some of the underlying factors necessary to keep our body's ideal position to fight diseases and prolong our longevity.

pH by definition is a scientific word that measures acidity, neutrality or alkalinity of solutions. Numerically, pH ranges from 0 – 14. Values less or greater than 7 describe “Acidic” or “Alkaline” solutions, respectively. A value of 7 describes “Neutral” solutions i.e. neither acid nor alkaline. The body has an acid-alkaline (or acid-base) ratio referring to pH which is a balance between positively charged ions (acid-forming) and negatively charged ions (alkaline-forming).

Normal blood requires a pH range of 7.35 – 7.45, with 7.365 being the optimum. This body pH range ensures the proper body's functioning as well as the delivery of the right amount of oxygen to tissues. Healthy urine pH is within 6.0 – 6.5 in the morning and 6.5 -7.0 in the evening while that of saliva within 6.5 -7.0 all day. The body continually strives to balance pH. When this balance is compromised many problems could occur. Over acidity in the body could force the body to borrow minerals such as Calcium, Magnesium, Sodium, Potassium, etc from vital organs as well as bones to balance and safely remove the body's acid. Because of this strain, the body can suffer severe and prolonged damage from this high acidity; this situation may exist undetected for years.

It is our responsibilities to consume food and water types, and their combinations along with others to contribute to the right body pH for its proper functioning. Food groups including grains, vegetable, fruit, dairy, protein, fat/oils, etc. that we eat burn in the body to leave different residues in the body. These residue sources are categorizable into acidic, alkaline and neutral and so are water types.

Water types include well water, tap water, bottled water, etc. are also categorizable based on pH into acidic, alkaline and neutral. Note that some differences exist in the source types of bottled water which include purified, mineral, spring, sparkled spring, artesian/artesian well, etc. They all have different specifications including the required mineral contents and have different pHs. These differences however small overtime have different effects on the body.

In addition, some types of foods/water are more acidic or alkaline than others (http://www.alkaline-alkaline.com/ph_food_chart.html) and after being burned leave different levels of residues. Most vegetable and fruit juices are highly alkaline. Most wine, some sodas or soft drinks, coffees, etc are highly acidic. Some tap/mineral/spring water could be more alkaline compared with some sparkled and purified water; unless the sparkled and purified water have sufficient minerals added to balance the water acidity. For the sake of Ghana, manufacturers of bottled and sachet water should label water with their mineral contents and concentrations, pH, Total Dissolved Solids (TDS), etc for consumers' information. Note that some distilled or reverse osmosis (RO) water with very little or no minerals content could be very acidic and dangerous for you.

While many conditions and diseases can interfere with the pH control in the body and cause a person's blood pH to fall outside of the healthy limits; excess acidic residue could also cause the blood pH to fall below 7.35 while that of excess alkaline could raise the pH above 7.45. This situation will require medical attention. At blood pH below 6.8 or above 7.8 our cells ceases to function and results in coma or death.

On one hand, blood pH values below 7.35 relates to excess or over acidity (acidosis) in the body. Associated health problems with over acidity includes high blood pressure, heart attacks, stoke, cardiovascular damage, constriction of blood vessels, reduction of blood oxygen, weight gain or obesity, osteoporosis, compromised immune system, hormonal imbalances, low energy and chronic fatigue, acid reflux (heart burns), acid indigestion and

excessive flatulence, slow digestion, accelerated damage from free radical possibly contributing to cancerous mutations and premature aging (http://www.antiagingresearch.com/ph_balance_rx.shtml).

On the other hand, blood pH values above 7.45 relates to excess or over alkaline (alkalosis) in the body. Associated health problems include bladder infections, low blood pressure, malabsorption, increased cold and sinusitis, diarrhea/upset stomach, foot fungus, night sweats, itchy skin, mold allergies, worsened allergies, muscle pain and headaches.

Over acidity or acidosis is more common in our society and the reason is mostly due to the typical African diet, which is far too high in acid-producing products and far too low in alkaline-producing foods like fresh vegetables and fruits. Additionally, we eat acid-producing processed foods like white flour and sugar, and drink acid-producing beverages including coffee and soft drinks especially the colas. Moreover, some drugs, alcohol, less sleep, stress, worrying, eating overly cooked or microwaved foods, etc could produce acidity in our body. Also, I believe habitually listening to depressing songs, music, conversations and being bitter could overtime create acidic conditions in your body. Imagine an always stressed person who eats starchy food with lots of meat; drink slightly acidic water, wine afterwards with no alkaline foods and eats late every day (<http://www.acidalkalinediet.com/alkaline-diet/how-to-control-your-ideal-body-ph>). Apart from the consequences of over acidity in the body, cancerous cells survive in acidic environment.

With the above said, the question is what foods and water types as well as their combinations are best for our longevity or should one consume to be healthy with prolonged life? Some dietary choices will replenish your mineral supplies and also assist the body to regulate a healthy blood pH. Consuming a diet high in alkaline foods including vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, and seeds will provide a better match for your blood pH. With good food choices made, the body would not struggle with excess acidity hence channel its energies for other important body functions. In addition, you can match your food choices with the water types. Food high in acid-forming could be matched with sufficient alkaline food and/or alkaline water with high ionic balance and vice versa. To restore health, it is recommended that your food contain about 80% alkaline forming foods and 20% acid forming. Moreover, to maintain health your food should contain about 60% alkaline forming foods and 40% acid forming. (<http://truthquest2.com/pHbalance.htm>).

Reading or researching on food and water types as well as their combinations will unveil some of the hidden treasures for long life. Picking alkaline, neutral and acidic foods cautiously to maintain balanced body pH is very necessary. It will be great to mixed acidic, neutral, and alkaline food in the right proportions. (<http://www.truthistreason.net/ph-levels-and-cancer-alkaline-and-acidic-foods>). Habitual consumers of acidic foods with little/no alkaline foods will require drinking copious amount of slightly alkaline water like some mineral water with good ionic balance and pH above 7. On the other hand, regular consumers of alkaline foods with little/no acidic foods will require drinking slightly acidic water like some of the purified waters/carbonated water which has good ionic balance and pH slightly below 7. In general, tap water will go well with all types of foods however; the tap water needs to be safe for drinking.

It will be appropriate if one could test the pH levels to determine if the body's pH needs urgent attention – urine or saliva is easier to test. It is recommended to test your pH about one hour before a meal and two hours after a meal. In addition, test your pH at least twice or regularly a month. A pH test strip can be used for determining your pH factor quickly and easily at home. pH strips may be available in pharmacies near you. If a pH strip or instrument is unavailable, there are plant extract which could be used as pH indicators. (<http://chemistry.about.com/cs/acidsandbases/a/aa060703a.htm>).

Watch out for any funny tasting water including ones which has slight burning sensation on the tongue. Some of the funny taste could be attributed to unwanted ions in excess amount in the water while the slight tongue burning sensation could be the water being very acidic. Know what and when to eat, drink enough water and exercise. In spite of the worrying and stressful situation in which one finds his/herself, try to be cheerful, have a good attitude towards life, have a good plan, listen to inspirational messages and songs while making attempts and be positive. Read more and know yourself. Strive to educate yourself. Seek for regular medical checkups. I believe consumption of good food and water types and their combinations will promote a healthy Ghana as well as increase productivity. God bless Ghana as well as Africa.

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